

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Palm Sunday  
April 19, 2020  
Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran  
**Theme: Just as he said**

—Acts 2:14a, 22-32

72 hours. About three days. That's all. That's how many days it had been since Peter found himself in the courtyard of the high priest denying Jesus and swearing to God that he did not know the man, just as Jesus said he would. That wasn't an isolated incident for Peter though. You see, before that, Peter displayed a lack of trust and understanding of the things that Jesus had foretold. Earlier in Jesus' ministry Peter had given a rock-solid confession of who Jesus really is. He said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" and right after that Jesus started teaching his disciples that he would have to go to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and then be raised to life. But then Peter took him aside to correct the Son of the living God, and he said "Never Lord!" Even up until the night that Jesus was Betrayed, Peter (and the other disciples, Peter was just the most outspoken) struggled to accept what Jesus told him. Jesus told his disciples that they would all fall away on account of him. But again Peter said, "Never! If all fall away, I never will." And that's when Jesus told Peter that Peter would deny him three times. Sure enough, just as the Lord had said, Peter denied Jesus. That night, the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Peter then ran off and wept bitterly. That was the last interaction Peter had with Jesus before Jesus' death. Less than 72 hours after that, the risen Lord Jesus appeared to Peter and the rest of the disciples in the upper room.

If you were just hearing this account for the first time what do you suspect Jesus would say to them and especially to Peter? "I told you so!" You might suspect a rebuke for their slow understanding and disbelief. He could have righteously rubbed it in their faces that he was right and they were wrong. He could have heaped guilt and shame upon them. But instead, he said, "Peace to you! Peace." He said it twice. This was definitely an I-told-you-so moment, but Jesus simply proclaimed peace.

Peter finally connected the dots—things happened just as the Lord said. Jesus didn't have to say, "I told you so, because Peter was brought to the realization on Easter and in the following days. Or Sermon text for today from Acts 2 takes us to Pentecost Sunday, 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. Peter addressed the crowds of Jews that traveled from all over for the festival of Pentecost. They were some of the same people who would have been in Jerusalem for the Passover when Jesus was crucified. The same guy who caved under the pressure of a servant girl on Maundy Thursday now stood before thousands of people and boldly said, **"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."**

All this was according to God will and foreknowledge. It was no accident or unfortunate turn of events. God planned it. It happened just as he said it would. But at the same time, Peter points out that the people who shouted crucify bear the blame for reject Jesus Christ, **"And you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross... But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."** The Lord did it just as he said.

Long before Jesus told his disciples about his suffering and death and resurrection, the Lord said it would happen through his ancient prophets. Peter quotes a Psalm of David who lived 1000 years before Jesus: **"David said about him: 'I saw the Lord always before me... my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.'" Certainly David wasn't talking about himself. He had died 1000 year before and his remains were still there in Jerusalem. But he knew and he trusted that the Lord would come through on his promise that his very own descendent would rule forever on his throne. In 2 Samuel 7 the Lord made that promise to David. The Angel Gabriel even said to Mary when Jesus birth was announced, **"The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."****

The Lord came through on his promise just as he said. He sent Jesus, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, but also true God from eternity. He died just as he said. But death could not keep him in the grave because Just as the Lord said, he raised him to life proving that he is exactly who he said he was. This wasn't some innovative doctrine. This was exactly in line with what promise people like David trusted long before it happened. And it happened, just as the Lord said. That is the gist of Peter's Sermon.

Do you think Peter was being hypocritical by preaching what he preached 53 days after he denied Jesus and failed to trust his words? He points back to a prophecy that was already 1000 years old and clearly demonstrates that David was talking about Jesus, the Christ, who would rise from the dead. I don't think Peter is being hypocritical, though. I think he's also preaching the law to himself. Peter should have known and trusted the words of David who prophesied about the Christ. He should have trusted the words that came straight from the Messiah's mouth that he had to die and then rise again, Just as he said.

Peter's pre-Easter struggle is our struggle too. We know what the Lord says. We have access to all of the prophecies of Scripture and the gospels that proclaim the truth about Christ and the eyewitness accounts of the risen Lord. But in the moment, in the here and now, we so easily fail to grasp the words of God and to trust his promises. The Lord has kept every promise just as he said. But when we worry we fail to trust those promises. We treat the Lord like a mere man, as though he might not come through this time. Simple trust is often forfeited for hopeless doubt. Instead of doing and living just as the Lord says and trusting that the Lord's ways are best, we've displayed blatant disregard for the God and his will. And maybe we've tasted the bitter consequences for that.

Peter wasn't quick to trust Jesus' and his Word and to trust that the Lord would come through just as he said. But he's not being hypocritical by preaching what he preached that day. Rather, Peter displays something that is only possible by the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit—repentance. He knew he was just as guilty as the ones he was preaching to on Pentecost. He denied his Lord even though he knew better than the ones who put Jesus to death. We have to confess that we are just as guilty of the sins of doubt and rejection. We know that. But the risen Lord Jesus had words of peace for even for Peter. Peter knew that too so he proclaimed that peace that can only come through Jesus. He proclaimed it even to the ones who nailed Jesus to the cross. He proclaims that peace even to us. He proclaims peace by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which happened just as he said.

The proclamation of Jesus' resurrection is a proclamation of peace. He was nailed to the cross according to God's will and for our sins. He was raised to life for our justification. Death could not keep him in the grave because the Lord long before promised that his Holy One would not be abandoned to the grave nor would he see decay. And it happened, just as he said. Peter and many others were all witnesses of that fact.

They witnessed Jesus, risen from the dead, just days after they had all fallen away on account of him. Imagine if you got to stand before the risen Lord under similar circumstances. Just days or hours or moments after such a fall into temptation or doubt or worry... It could certainly be an I-told-you-so moment. How often could the Lord come to us and say, "I told you so!" How often could he righteously rub in our faces our doubt and sin? But of all the things he could say; of all the things he should say he proclaims peace. Peace. Peace with the very God against whom we have sinned, whom we have doubted. He doesn't say shame on you. He says peace be with you. Peace because Jesus died for you and then he was raised to life for you, just as he said.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our risen Lord.

Amen!